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VOICING THE MUTILATED WOMAN'S STORY:
THE INTERTEXTUAL REALATIONSHIP BETWEEN KATHERINE ANNE PORTER
AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in
English from The College of William and Mary

High Honors

(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)



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2009

In a 1931 letter to her intimate friend and fellow author Caroline Gordon, Katherine Anne Porter writes, “At last I got hold of Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* and it curdled the marrow in my bones. I have never seen such a cold-blooded assault on the nerve-ends, so unrepentant a statement of horror as that book. [...] It left me so shaken and unnerved I could hardly believe the face of the sun” (“Letter” 39). Porter juxtaposes her visceral reaction to Faulkner’s work with a recounting of a news story that detailed the violent rape and murder of an unsuspecting young woman. The girl’s two male attackers were posing as police officers; using their disguises they lured the young woman into a warehouse where they brutally marred her body. The young woman was found dead the next day with “a broken bottle [...] forced into her womb” (“Letter” 39). Reflecting on her reading of both the news story and *The Sound and the Fury* (1930), Porter concludes, “Not that things don’t happen. But, *my God!* There should be something in a work of art that gives you something to hang onto after the very worst has been told” (“Letter” 39).

Porter’s juxtaposition of these two reading experiences effectively aligns Faulkner’s text with the news story’s mutilated female body—the guilty assailant, Faulkner himself. Indeed, a female body does lie at the center of *The Sound and the Fury*. For many readers, Caddy Compson is the focal point of the novel. In fact, in interviews given to students at the University of Virginia, Faulkner states that the impetus for the novel was a vision of a young girl witnessing her grandmother’s funeral from a tree branch while her male siblings look at her muddied underpants. Further, the novel itself is divided into four sections with four distinct narrative voices, each denoting an attempt “[to] try to draw the picture of Caddy” (Faulkner, “Session” 6) in Faulkner’s mind. While

the novel is “about” Caddy and her illegitimate daughter, the first three sections of the text are attributed to Caddy’s brothers—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—and the fourth section reads from the perspective of a third-person omniscient narrator—a perspective that Faulkner claimed once to be his own attempt at telling Caddy’s story (“Session” 1). “Caddy’s story,” though, as we will see, is also the story of the decline of the patriarchal Compson family; that Caddy herself is denied the textual space to tell her own story appears at first a textual anomaly. Critics and readers alike have pondered the nature and function of Caddy’s silence in the text—why must her story be filtered through male voices? Does her silence serve a purpose? When asked about Caddy’s silence, Faulkner is recorded as having stated, “Caddy was [...] to me too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, [and I thought] that it would be more passionate to see her through somebody else’s eyes” (“Session” 1). “[Caddy] was my heart’s darling,” Faulkner continues in the interview, “and I used the tools which seemed to me the proper tools to try to tell [Caddy’s story]” (“Session” 6). Caddy’s voice is thus silenced in favor of masculine ones—the “proper tools” of which Faulkner speaks—for fear that the expression of her own voice would negatively impact, or even undermine, her position as an object of beauty in the text and in Faulkner’s mind.

There is nothing *beautiful*, however, for Porter about the murdered woman’s silencing in the news story. By means of male violence the murdered woman was reduced to a mutilated body, eviscerated in the womb—a symbol of femaleness and female vulnerability. Porter’s juxtaposition of these two women suggests that from her perspective as a reader these two acts of silencing are in some way connected. Noteworthy, then, is the discrepancy between Faulkner’s and Porter’s approaches, or

reactions to, the silencing of female voices. For Faulkner, Caddy's silence engenders Caddy as an object of beauty. Conversely, for Porter, the silencing of female voices connotes violence, mutilation, and even death—it is brutal, like the news story woman's assault. Ultimately, the silencing of Caddy, and that of the woman in the news story, symbolize, for Porter, the silencing of the woman writer according to the narrative of patriarchy and its privileging of white male authority over non-white men and women and white women. In what are at times collectively referred to as “the Miranda Stories”—particularly *Old Mortality* (1936), *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1937), and the short story “The Grave” (1935)—Porter responds to this silencing, choosing to “examin[e] the issue from the perspective of [...] the victims of oppression” (Bauer, “Legacy” 9) by chronicling the semi-autobiographical Miranda's search for her own voice within, and perhaps in spite of, the narrative of patriarchy. Karl Zender has endeavored to trace the relationship between Porter's *Old Mortality* and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in *Faulkner and the Politics of Reading* by arguing that through Miranda, Porter retroactively gives voice to the decidedly female experiences of Caddy Compson. Zender engages in an “extended comparison between Miranda and Caddy” in order to examination “how gender inflects representations of similar experiences by a female and male author” (54). I extend Zender's reading and argue that Porter goes one step further, giving voice also to the mutilated woman of the news story and herself as a female reader by challenging the power dynamics and gender politics inherent in female objectification. As Patricia Yeager notes in *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990*, in Faulkner and in much of Southern literature, “[the] female body offers a site for political labor, a place for uncoding and recoding the epic disasters of the southern body

politic” (291). Ultimately, Porter posits an alternative ideal—the mutuality of gender in relation to the inheritance of identity scripts. In doing so, Porter is endeavoring to carve out space in the literary consciousness of the American South for female subjectivity in the form of the woman writer.

Interestingly, Margaret Donovan Bauer makes a similar argument for an intertextual relationship between Faulkner and Ellen Gilchrist, another Southern woman writer. Bauer suggests that Gilchrist “engages in [...] a dialogue with Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*” (104) in *The Annunciation*. According to Bauer, by allowing her female protagonist to narrate plot points that echo Faulkner’s text, “[Gilchrist] exposes the misogyny that created, destroyed, and all the while revered Caddy Compson” (*Fiction* 104). In her setting up of this relationship between Faulkner and Gilchrist, Bauer enlists Patricia Yeager’s work on intertextuality and women’s writing that ultimately proves beneficial to an intertextual reading of Faulkner and Porter. In *Honey-Mad Women*, Yeager “[rejects] the assumption that dialogue with the dominant tradition is useless to the woman writer as an emancipatory strategy [since] it always involves representations of a complicitous or oppressive discourse, and such representation inevitably reenacts this oppression” (152). Indeed, as Richard Gray suggests, “each southern writer works within a map that locates him or her as both autonomous and engaged, separate yet involved in a vaster regional and transregional geography of speech” (*Web* 5). Ultimately, Porter examines the social function of storytelling as well as the politics located therein as dictated by patriarchy. In the end, Porter finds a space for female subjectivity in “The Grave” where she posits, if only momentarily, an intertextual relationship more akin to

sibling rivalry characterized by mutual subjectivity than a patriarchal one contingent upon a father text.

It is necessary, perhaps, first to contextualize Porter's reading of, and reaction to, Faulkner's text by examining the literary climate in which Faulkner and Porter found themselves. Faulkner and Porter were writing in what has since been termed the Southern Renaissance. While scholars such as Lewis Simpson, Richard H. King, and Cleanth Brooks attest to the difficulties of offering a comprehensive definition of the Southern Renaissance, either in terms of author inclusion or in the implications bound up in the very title "renaissance," each scholar discusses the role of the Fugitive-Agrarians and Faulkner in some capacity. By most accounts, the period known as the Southern Renaissance began in the 1920s. For Simpson, King, and Brooks, the Southern Renaissance marked a shift in the white Southern consciousness toward the preservation of Southern culture, history, and identity. In terms of literature, this manifested itself, in many cases, in texts wherein authors attempted to write about the nature of white Southern identity. For the Fugitive-Agrarians such as Allen Tate and Andrew Lytle, in particular, the Southern Renaissance has been defined in part by a return to the pastoral image of the idealized plantation as a source of Southern memory and an affirmation of history "[in] opposition to modernity" (Simpson 65), particularly the perceived "debasement of the humanity of man" and "the loss of the classical-Christian values of the Western world" (Simpson 65). According to Simpson, for writers like Tate and Lytle, the patriarchal plantation, despite its ties to the institution of slavery, became "the source of a conviction of history as a dimension of the soul and thus the source of *his* [the white male Southern writer's] being as a [Southern] writer" (89, emphasis mine). Therein lies

perhaps the movement's central contentious point as Simpson defines it. Inasmuch as the patriarchal plantation privileges the authority of the white male father and white male overseer over non-whites and white women, a return to the pastoral as the source of regional memory and history denotes the disenfranchisement or dispossession—with very few exceptions—of non-white and female voices from the historical narrative. Scholar Elizabeth Jane Harrison asserts that “the garden archetype” or pastoral motif has “served the Southern white patriarchy—including its male authors—for over two hundred years as an effective metaphor of both land and labor” (3). White women, meanwhile, “were connected symbolically with land ownership” (Harrison 6), not as owners or authorities, but insofar as they were considered property of white males. The connection of white women to land, or more specifically to the idealized plantation, is so rooted in literature and culture that the destruction or sale of land was often rendered metaphorically as the rape of a white woman (Harrison 6-7).

For Harrison, the solution for the white woman writer is “[the creation of] an alternative female pastoral tradition” (9) wherein “communal values” might “replace [the] hierarchical ones” (12) of patriarchy. These communal values do seem to parallel the sort of mutuality we will see Porter posit in “The Grave”; however, the intertextual relationship between Faulkner and Porter must not be conceptualized as merely a struggle between two gendered versions of the pastoral. Certainly, it is problematic to fully link either Faulkner or Porter to the pastoral movement either engendered by, or in opposition to, writers such as Tate and Lytle. As previously mentioned, Simpson, King, and Brooks each endeavor to articulate Faulkner's role in the Southern Renaissance and his relationship to the Fugitive-Agrarians in some capacity. King summarizes the complexity

of Faulkner's position in the Southern Renaissance most aptly by noting, "[Faulkner] is dangerous" (19) in that he "cannot be tied up and neatly claimed for any one position" (19). He was, however, generally considered "a spokesman for modern humanism, the South's mouthpiece for teaching the world what had been lost" (King 12) by many of Tate's literary circle in the way of an "honorary Agrarian" (King 12).

Alternatively, for Simpson, Faulkner helped "[to inaugurate] a struggle to comprehend the nature of memory and history" (70) rooted in the retreat to the patriarchal pastoral. Faulkner's portrait of the demise of the patriarchal Compson family in *The Sound and the Fury* seems to echo Simpson's sentiments regarding potential limitations of such history and memory affirmation given the patriarchal plantation's ties to slavery and general oppression on the basis of race and gender of nonwhites and white women. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner engages in a *deliberate* dismantling, rather than veneration, of the idealized patriarchal family; notably, in the novel, the selling of the family plantation land parallels Quentin's suicide, as if the loss of the land necessarily leads to the break down, or perhaps end of, patriarchy. The thematic similarities between Faulkner and the Fugitive-Agrarians, however, may be found in their repression of female voices—a subject never broached in Brooks' estimation of the Faulkner-Fugitive-Agrarian relationship. That Faulkner's dismantling of the idealized patriarchal family hinges upon the silencing of Caddy indicates an alignment of Faulkner with writers such as Tate and Lytle insofar as the pastoral dictates the objectification, or reduction, of white women to mere bodies and/or white male possessions in the context of patriarchal authority.

Porter's relationship to the Fugitive-Agrarian writers is complicated not only because she is a woman writer, but also as a result of her close friendship with Caroline Gordon and Tate, Caroline's husband. Mary Titus and Darlene Unrue pinpoint Porter's artistic turn to the South and its inhabitants to the blossoming of Porter's friendship with Gordon and Tate in the 1930s (Titus 178; Unrue, *Life* 105). At that time, Porter had already begun to establish her literary career with the publication of "Maria Concepción" in *Century Magazine* in 1922 and "He" in October 1927, to name a few, but her literature for the most part was set against the backdrop of Mexico and the American Southwest. The artistic turn enacted by Porter as a result of her friendship with Gordon and Tate was inextricably linked to a personal turn as well to the white aristocracy of the South as a source of personal memory and history. Titus states, "as [Porter] drew increasingly near to members of the Agrarian writers community, she turned to the South and her own past, part memory, part legend, to craft both an ambitious family history and a new public presence" (6). She longed to recast her troubled adolescence—"[to] order the painful disorders of her childhood" (Titus 12)—in the lineage of the (white) southern aristocracy and found a certain amount of solace in the idealized notion of white womanhood and the sense of self and social place it entailed. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, "The conservative politics of the Agrarians included a narrow view of women's place and potential" (Titus 6), which included, of course, skepticism about the place of women in the literary profession. Indeed, "Although men like Allen Tate and Andrew Lytle sought to liberate southern letters, they were not equally ready to liberate southern women" (Titus 179). Porter's reading of, and reaction to, Faulkner's *The Sound and in Fury* is connected to this very tension; Caddy's silencing is disturbing because while Porter

longed to be a part of the white Southern aristocratic tradition of the South—an object of beauty and signifier of Southern piety—she also felt the impetus to carve out a space for her own authorial voice.

Interestingly, Faulkner's sentiments echo the deep-seated fears of Porter herself as to the position of the woman writer in society. According to Faulkner's statements previously mentioned, Caddy as an object of beauty and the hypothetical expression of Caddy's own narrative voice are mutually exclusive representations of womanhood in the American South ("Session" 1). It follows, by this logic, that were Caddy to gain expression within the text, she would become somewhat less beautiful, or necessarily displaced as the central figure of beauty. According to Titus, this was the very transformation Porter feared: "A turn away from women's traditional roles toward the independent creativity of an artistic career represented [...] a turn away from what she had learned was natural to female identity. To become an artist was to deny her sexuality; it was to become, in Porter's own words, 'monstrous'" (7).

Scholars and critics other than Titus have picked up on this tension in Porter's fiction between Porter's desire to be both a woman and a woman writer; each critic, however, casts this tension in a different way. Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr. argues that Porter vacillates between traditionalist and modernist impulses in her writing regarding the nature of memory and history in the Miranda stories (149, 152). Andrea Frankwitz attests that Porter's female characters in the Miranda stories simultaneously perpetuate and rebel against their identities designated by patriarchy (473). Moreover, Anne Goodwyn Jones, one of only a handful of scholars and/or critics to link Faulkner and Porter, maintains that, at least in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Porter struggles between the

existent patriarchy—established, for Jones, interestingly, in Faulkner’s Sartoris stories—and (the potential for) a matriarchal order (“Gender” 142). In *Tomorrow is Another Day*, Jones makes a case for the presence of this perceived tension between femininity and artistry in the writing experiences of many Southern women writers. She maintains that “the very act of writing itself evoked within these women [writers] a sense of self-contradiction, for southern ladies were expected to defer to men’s opinions, yet writing required an independent mind” (*Tomorrow* xi).

As many of the aforementioned analyses of Porter’s work and Jones’s scholarship indicate, the experience of the woman writer in the South was tied nearly always to patriarchy and the expectations placed upon women as members of a community dictated by patriarchy. Patriarchy is a communal narrative of sorts—that is, as Michael Kreyling might suggest, it “embodies the group’s nearest image of itself” (*Figures* 11) and “the group defines itself and recreates itself in the repetition of [this] form, [confirming] its understanding of the nature of things in the ritual of retelling” (*Figures* 11). The narrative of patriarchy dictates specific roles or identity scripts to individuals according to race and/or gender, and it is according to the privileges or restrictions imparted in these scripts that one orients oneself within the given community, in this instance the South. These scripts are perpetuated within the idealized patriarchal family, specifically through the telling of familial stories for the benefit of children, who are designated script inheritors. It is by means of the continued fulfillment of these identity scripts that the hierarchal values of patriarchy—that is, the privileging of white over nonwhite, male over female—are strengthened and maintained. Thus, the dismantling of the idealized patriarchal family can be enacted through the failure of individuals to fulfill their inherited identity scripts.

Faulkner engages in this very method in *The Sound and the Fury*. None of the Compson siblings is able to successfully fulfill his or her inherited identity script, beginning, significantly, with Caddy. As a part of the patriarchal narrative, white women are understood to be “fragile flower[s]” (A. Jones, *Tomorrow* 9). More than that, however, Anne Goodwyn Jones notes, “the image of the [white] Southern lady represents her culture’s idea of religious, moral, sexual, racial, and social perfection” (*Tomorrow* 9). White, chaste, and delicate, the female body, though clearly idealized, becomes the designated space or territory—like the idealized patriarchal plantation—upon which the gender, racial, and sexual politics of the community are metaphorically writ. To preserve this female body in a state of purity is to ensure the purity of the community as a whole, particularly for future generations. And the person charged with the protection of this female body within the patriarchal narrative is none other than the white male. Thus, the failure of the white woman to fulfill her own identity script indicates a failure on the part of the white male also.

Caddy’s failure to fulfill the patriarchal script of white southern womanhood is foreshadowed in the novel’s central scene that gets retold and examined over and over again through the eyes of the Compson men. All four Compson children are playing near a creek bed when Caddy decides to jump into the water. Seeing Caddy in nothing but “her bodice and drawers” (*Sound* 18), Quentin slaps her and causes Caddy to “[fall] down in the water” (*Sound* 18). Caddy then splashes her brothers with the muddy water in retaliation. Then she begins scaling a tree to look through the second story window in on their grandmother’s funeral. Meanwhile, her brothers and the family’s black servants—all male—watch her muddied underpants from the ground. Benjy describes this pivotal

moment: “We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn’t see her. We could hear the tree thrashing” (*Sound* 39). Caddy’s brothers are visually fixated on Caddy’s muddied underpants; symbolically Caddy’s siblings’ preoccupation with her muddied underpants represents their preoccupation with the maintenance of Caddy’s sexual purity. Later on in the text, Caddy has sexual intercourse with Dalton Ames and becomes pregnant, thereby solidifying her failure to remain sexually pure. Ultimately, Caddy’s brother Quentin—the Compson boy in whom all of the family finances and biological hopes are invested in order that he might fulfill the role of white male patriarch—is driven to suicide as a result of his perceived failure to protect Caddy and the marring of Caddy’s purity. Throughout the text, there is a focus on Caddy’s inability to conform to the patriarchal conceptualization of women as mere objects of beauty—signifiers of familial honor and communal piety in their sexual purity—and her brothers’ subsequent failures to assume the role of protector and provider of Caddy’s objectified body. As such, the story of the Compson family constitutes a partial dismantling of the idealized patriarchal family insofar as it underscores the failure of a narrative of patriarchy to replicate itself.

While *The Sound and the Fury* may be, and should be, read as a partial critique of the idealized patriarchal family, it is, ultimately, merely that: partial, or limited. In his professed need to silence Caddy, Faulkner echoes the representational strategies of Tate, and the other Fugitive-Agrarians, who silence or at least marginalize female voices and, by extension, women writers. Because identity scripts are (potentially) revised, bestowed, inherited and internalized via the telling and retelling of familial stories, the designation of who is, and who is not, allowed to tell these stories is therefore just as significant, if

not more so, than the actual content of these scripts. Indeed, as Suzanne Jones aptly surmises in her examination of the act of reading in *Old Mortality*, “a story is not simply a representation of the world but of the storyteller’s vision of the world” (185). As previously noted, the narrative of patriarchy values hierarchical relationships and privileges whites over non-whites, and males over females (Frankwitz 474). As a result, with the exception of a few notable woman writers such as Augusta Evans and Margaret Mitchell (A.Jones, *Tomorrow* xi) who were able to gain popular attention, critical attention and inclusion into the Southern literary canon prior to the 1980s was largely limited to the literature of white males (Manning 2). That white male voices have traditionally been given preference over, if not at times altogether eclipsed, the expression of white female and nonwhite voices, especially in connection with the construction of Southern memory and history, is certainly problematic. One need only look to Porter’s reaction, as a woman writer, to Faulkner’s representation of Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury* and the mutilated female body of the news story to which it is connected in order to grasp the complexity of the politics of storytelling under a patriarchal order for the objectified female intertextually, and the woman writer extratextually.

The politics of storytelling under patriarchy interrogated by Porter must be understood, in terms of my argument, to refer to the hierarchical relation of white male subjectivity to white female objectivity. Ultimately, the silencing of Caddy indicates her objectification—she reduced to a mere body. Conversely, in the *telling* of the story of Caddy’s objectified body, Faulkner and the Compson brothers are exercising their own subjectivity, granted them because of their status as white males within the patriarchal

narrative. Siobhan Somerville argues that “[the] classification of bodies” (3) as objects is part of the way society, or those who hold positions of authority in society, attempt to grapple with “[the] instability of multiple categories of difference” (5), including race, sexuality, and gender. Further, “the emphasis on the surveillance of bodies” inherent in the subject-object relationship “was part of the profound reorganization of vision and knowledge in American culture” (Somerville 10) at the turn of the twentieth century. By insisting that Caddy’s story be told through the eyes of the Compson men and the third-person omniscient narrator, a gaze is established wherein the white male subject denotes authority over Caddy’s white female body. It follows, then, that for women to assert their own subjectivity, they must become storytellers. In *Honey-Mad Women*, Yaeger asserts, “Writing gives the woman writer a space in which she can expropriate men’s texts and treat these texts as bodies. These embodied texts are mortal, penetrable, excitable; they become imperfect sites of that sometime thing we call ‘patriarchal discourse’” (161). Thus, in Yaeger’s estimation, intertextuality between male and female authors can constitute an inversion of this hierarchical subject-object relationship sanctioned by patriarchy. Porter engages in this way with *The Sound and the Fury*; however, she ultimately posits an alternative means of understanding intertextuality to the hierarchical subject-object relationship in “The Grave.”

As far as I am aware, only a handful of scholars, including Zender, have ever endeavored to connect Faulkner and Porter on a critical or analytical level—Sari Edelstien, however, is one such scholar. In her piece “‘Pretty as Pictures’: Family Photography and Southern Postmemory in Porter’s *Old Mortality*,” Edelstein links Faulkner and Porter thematically, drawing connections between *Absalom, Absalom!*

(1936) and *Old Mortality* (1936). She asserts that both texts are concerned with the function of remembering and forgetting and the influence of the historical past on the present in white southern literature. Grafting Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory, developed initially for the study of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, Edelstein concludes that Faulkner and Porter, through the characterization of Quentin and Miranda, respectively, "reveal the ways in which familial constructions of the past are fundamental to southern subjectivity" (163)—these familial constructions being family stories whereby "southern postmemory conserves and transmits ideology over many generations" (154). For Hirsch, "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood or recreated" (qtd. in Edelstein 152).

Certainly, any reader of *Old Mortality* (1936) is sure to take note of the plethora of family stories that bombard Miranda and her sister Maria. The Gay family loves "to tell stories, romantic and poetic, or comic with romantic humor" (*Order* 99) and, according to the narrator, "[the girls'] hearts and imaginations were captivated by their past, a past in which worldly considerations had played a very minor role" (*Order* 99)—in these family stories "it was the feeling that mattered" (*Order* 99). As the narrative progresses, the reader is privy to the girls' maturation that also includes an increasing ability to discern myth/romanticism from reality on the girls' part. As Edelstein aptly surmises, "the girls confront the inconsistency between reality and memory, but they also become aware of the past itself as a construct" (160). Because historical events and familial anecdotes are subject to the storyteller's motives and perspective, the listener or

narrative inheritor is at the mercy of the storyteller, or in the case of the American South the patriarchal authority. The question is one of narrative authenticity—again, who is allowed to tell stories and how are these stories verified as truth? Moreover, are these narratives inherited in isolation or can they be engendered in sibling pairings across gender lines? Again, I suggest that Porter is interrogating these very issues in *Old Mortality*, *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, and “The Grave” by using in textual sibling inheritor pairings to model, in some ways, the sibling rivalry mode of intertextuality between herself and Faulkner.

Faulkner’s relationship to women writers in general seems, in some ways, similar to that of a rivalry between a brother and his sisters. In terms of his own literary influences, Faulkner has largely refrained from naming any women writers except—a bit begrudgingly—Willa Cather (Wittenberg 287-289). Judith Bryant Wittenberg has recently attempted a refocusing of the discussion of Faulkner’s influences to acknowledge the impact of female authorship on his craft. What is most interesting about Wittenberg’s cataloguing of Faulkner’s influences, however, is that Wittenberg frames her discussion of the relationship between a writer and his or her predecessors in the hierarchical language of familial inheritance, positioning these “previous texts” as “literary fathers and mothers” (Wittenberg 270). Well-renowned critic and scholar Harold Bloom can no more escape this language of inheritance than Wittenberg. He frames the relationship between a writer and his predecessors as “[a] battle between father and son as mighty opposites” (Bloom 26).

Of course such a characterization of literary intertextuality is primarily problematic in its explicit exclusion of women writers from authorial participation.

Groundbreaking feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, though they are primarily concerned with British texts, are particularly attuned to this implicit exclusion of female voices as evidenced by their assertion that “[the] woman writer does *not* ‘fit in’” (*Madwoman* 48) to Bloom’s theory. More disconcerting in Wittenberg’s and Bloom’s conceptualization of intertextual relationships, though, is the deliberate use of the parent-child relationship as a metaphor to interpret relationships between authors—a notion that echoes the hierarchies encapsulated in the patriarchal plantation ideal in the presumption of the superiority, or at least the primacy, of one text or authorial perspective over the other. Indeed, as a result of its hierarchical nature, Bloom’s theory is a “male-oriented” (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 48) one that leaves the woman writer “anomalous, indefinable, alienated, a freakish outsider” (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 48).

How might women writers, then, work with their male literary peers? Can women writers be considered inheritors in such a way as to allow their own subjectivity rather than alienation? Commenting on patterns of inheritance—both of identity scripts and land or property—in *Go Down Moses*, the editor of the essay collection *Faulkner’s Inheritance* Joseph Urgo writes, “for Faulkner, inheritance is no passive act of receivership, but an active challenge by forces outside our influence to command the future. In this understanding, we may see the issue of inheritance as central to a Faulknerian conception of the complex interplay between received conditions and the human capacity to act, to redress the past, to affect the present, and in one’s turn, to bequeath to the future the products of one’s own effort” (Urgo, “Introduction” xi-xii). I argue that a grafting of the relationship between Faulkner and Porter in Urgo’s language

is necessary in order to reframe their intertextual relationship outside that of a hierarchical pattern. To do so is to situate Faulkner's work as an "active challenge" (Urgo, "Introduction" xi-xii) to Porter and other women writers as sibling rivals engaged in debate rather than to position Faulkner himself as some sort of untouchable, patriarchal-like authority. His version of the South and means of constructing Southern identity must be challenged in the creation of, what theorist Mikhail Bakhtin calls "[the] great dialogue" (qtd. in Gray, *Web* ix).

Other prominent women writers have chronicled their respective encounters with the "active challenge" (Urgo, "Introduction" xi-xii) of reading Faulkner's works and writing post-Faulkner. Toni Morrison describes her own encounter and subsequent engagement with Faulkner in "Faulkner and Women," an essay included in the collection of the same name that includes a transcription of an interview with Morrison regarding her own personal literary heritage. Morrison locates her draw to Faulkner in what she calls his "'gaze'" (297). "He had a gaze that was different," Morrison continues, "It appeared, at that time, to be similar to a look, even a sort of staring, a refusal-to-look-away approach in his writing that I found admirable" (297). She concludes, "With Faulkner there was always something to surface. Besides, he could infuriate you in such wonderful ways. It wasn't just complete delight—there was also that other quality that is just as important as devotion: outrage. The point is that with Faulkner one was never indifferent" (Morrison 297).

Similarly, Flannery O'Connor rather famously likened Faulkner to a train barreling down the tracks at full speed: "the presence alone of Faulkner in our midst makes a great difference in what the writer can and cannot permit himself to do. Nobody

wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track as the Dixie Limited is roaring down” (45). According to Katherine Temple Prown, O’Connor’s rather public statement concerning Faulkner was not dissimilar to her private feelings that imply more than a little anxiety of perceived inadequacy (Prown 68). What is most interesting about O’Connor, though, is that her anxieties regarding Faulkner’s established position and her potential regional identity cannot be separated from her anxieties concerning her own gender identity. As Prown suggests, “The literary culture to which O’Connor sought entrée”—that is, the literary culture of the American South, specifically—“was founded on the exclusion of the muted, marginalized voices of women, blacks, and assorted ‘others’” (59). Rather than force her way onto the literary landscape as a distinctly female voice, O’Connor, at least in Prown’s estimation, “cultivated a decidedly masculine literary persona” (Prown 57)—O’Connor “[revised] her novels to meet the expectations of a critical establishment that considered women writers inferior” (Prown 57) rather than making a case for the inclusion of distinctly female voices. For O’Connor, just as for Faulkner, the notion of woman as writer/subject and the notion of woman as an object of beauty and the signifier of communal piety were mutually exclusive—her artistic expression warranting, ultimately, a denial of her own femaleness (Prown 57-58).

As previously mentioned, in many ways Faulkner’s relations with, and attitudes toward his female literary peers may be understood as case studies in sibling rivalry. Again, in her study attempting to link Faulkner to hitherto unacknowledged female literary precursors, Wittenberg discusses Faulkner’s tendency to deny outright the impact of female authors on the American literary landscape, as well as in the cataloguing of his own personal literary influences, despite his now critically acknowledged indebtedness to

Willa Cather and *My Antonia* in the creation of *The Sound and the Fury* (289). Another woman writer oft-neglected by Faulkner was Evelyn Scott, who is connected to Faulkner in such a way as to potentially be held partially culpable for his eventual literary success. Scott's biographer D. A. Callard records Scott's introduction the Mississippi writer, who, up to that point, had received little to no popular or critical attention for his three previously published works. It was at the height of Scott's own literary career, marked by the warm reception of her novel *The Wave* (1929), that Scott was given a copy of Faulkner's manuscript for what would become *The Sound and the Fury* by their mutual publisher. According to Callard, Scott saw so much thematic similarity between Faulkner's manuscript and her own work that she wrote "a long enthusiastic letter" to their mutual publisher praising Faulkner's technique (116). This same letter was then circulated by the publisher as an accompaniment to printed copies of *The Sound and the Fury* (Callard 116). Despite her role in the production of *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner failed to acknowledge Scott when asked to name significant female authors at a conference in 1949. He was ultimately prevailed to concede that Scott was "'pretty good, for a woman'" (Callard 116).

Porter had her very own run-in with Faulkner at a conference in Paris. According to Unrue's 2005 biography of Porter, both Faulkner and Porter were serving as American delegates to the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1952, a conference engineered to bolster anti-communist sentiment in Europe (*Life* 221). Both Faulkner and Porter gave talks during the conference. While Porter did not believe this to be her best public performance, she nevertheless endeavored to congratulate Faulkner at the conclusion of his well-received remarks. He walked right past her, however, neglecting to recognize

her as a fellow delegate. Unrue records that Porter “felt snubbed” (*Life* 223) by Faulkner’s behavior, so much so that she was later compelled to caricature him in the way of sibling mockery: ““He looked a sober, trim, beaknosed little bantam fighting cock....He is tiresome in his anti-intellectual, anti-literature posture, insisting he is only a farmer”” (*Life* 223). While Porter’s caricature of Faulkner after their less-than-memorable meeting in Paris indicates Porter’s exasperation with Faulkner’s behavior, we must turn to Porter’s fiction to begin to piece together her response to Faulkner’s literary efforts.

Old Mortality, the first in the series of texts I will examine, chronicles the coming of age of the semi-autobiographical Miranda Gay. According to both Unrue and Titus, *Old Mortality*, like many other Miranda stories, grew out of Porter’s never-completed autobiographical work titled “Many Redeemers” (Unrue 147; Titus 75-76).

Consequently, many of the narrative anecdotes are fictionalized versions of Porter’s own childhood experiences, cast, of course, in Miranda’s world of the white Southern aristocracy—a far cry from Porter’s own more humble beginnings. The text of *Old Mortality* is divided into three distinct sections. While the sections are not characterized by different narrative voices, as is the case in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, each section contains a nuanced version of what does or does not constitute acceptable womanhood. Moreover, in each section the girls’ confrontation with these white female identity scripts are mitigated in a different way. In the first section, it is through their observation of a portrait of Aunt Amy that looms over the text and through the listening to their father’s stories about Amy; in the second section, the girls attend a horse race and meet Amy’s former husband Uncle Gabriel; and in the third section, Miranda hears

Amy's story told from the perspective of her feminist Cousin Eva on a train bound for Uncle Gabriel's funeral.

Throughout *Old Mortality*, Porter explicitly employs and extends the trope of the objectified female body she found disturbing in Faulkner's work and exposes its ramifications for both the individual and the community. Miranda spends much of the text struggling to find her own story amid the many scripts of white southern femininity she has inherited from her elders. One such story is that told by Harry Gay, the father of Miranda and her elder sister Maria, and brother to Aunt Amy, who boasts, 'There were never any fat women in the family, thank God' (*Order* 98). A quick cataloguing of their female relatives by Maria and Miranda, however, reveals several glaring anomalies in Harry's triumphant statement. "But how did their father account for Great-aunt Eliza," the girls wonder, "who quite squeezed herself through doors, and who, when seated, was one solid pyramidal monument from floor to neck" (*Order* 98)? Their Great-aunt Keziah, too, "was famous for her heft" (*Order* 99), her husband going so far as to "[refuse] to allow her to ride his good horses" (*Order* 99) for fear that they would be crippled as a result of her unfortunate largess. With the positioning of these alternative—defiant—female bodies, Porter begins to broach the limitations of the objectification of female bodies as the sole means of female representation. She indicts and marks as ludicrous Faulkner's assertion that Caddy was "too beautiful and too moving" ("Session" 1) to tell her own story. Again, though, the question for Porter is whether or not a woman can be a writer and maintain her femininity. Miranda's in-text anxiety, then, should be understood as a manifestation of Porter's extratextual concern that "traditional femininity"

is largely in opposition to “the emerging persona [that is, woman writer] who rejects subjugation and accepts independence for the sake of her art” (DeMouy 7).

Harry Gay’s story is a premier example of a contrived or deliberately distorted narrative—at the very least, it is a romanticized history that implies a willingness, if not a desire, to render his familial history in a certain way for his daughters’ figurative consumption. It is crucial that at this point in the text the girls lack the ability to counter such narratives—they merely sense “without criticism” that “something seem[s] to happen to their father’s memory” (*Order* 99) when he attempts to account for the women in his family. According to Yaeger, within southern women writers’ literature, “the child is busy learning [...] a set of ideological desires and constraints” (“Beyond” 309). The content of Harry’s story—that is, the representation of woman encapsulated therein for the internalization of Maria and Miranda—is that of an objectified female body similar to Faulkner’s Caddy. Harry reduces his female relatives to mere bodies—“in every generation without exception, as slim as reeds and graceful as sylphs” (*Order* 99). In both instances, women are at the mercy of male subjectivity in accordance with the narrative of patriarchy—the Gay females positioned as the silent objects of Harry’s narrative rather than subjects/authors, themselves.

Caddy Compson’s primary literary descendant, however, is Aunt Amy. Amy, like Caddy, is denied textual space for her own narrative expression—her story must be pieced together by Maria and Miranda from the stories told by their father and grandmother rather than from Amy’s own stories. As previously mentioned, in *Old Mortality*, Amy is silenced because she is already dead when the text opens—her presence in the text is constituted by familial stories told about her and also by her

portrait that hangs above the family mantel. Thus, it is not even Amy's body at the center of the text. By restricting Amy's representation within the text to a photographic portrait—a notably contrived representation—Porter hyperbolizes the objectification of the female body Faulkner utilizes in *The Sound and the Fury*. Bound both literally and figuratively as a printed representation by a “dark walnut frame” (*Order* 97), Amy is an object in the most actual sense. M. K. Forhataro-Neil's work concerning the fate of silent figures in literature is thus most applicable. He suggests, “characters who cannot speak for the themselves are destined to be written by others in such a way as to conform to the narrative purpose” (Forhataro-Neil 349). Certainly, this is the case with Amy, who has been reduced to “a ghost in a frame, and a sad, pretty story from old times” (*Order* 98)—silent fodder for the storytelling, and/or subjectivity, of others.

Katherine Henninger elaborates on the function of photographs within the literature of southern women writers, particularly as both points of literary and cultural tensions surrounding the traditional representations of women and also as the means by which such representations might be subverted. Henninger suggests that “women have been represented in prescribed ways, carefully stilled and silenced within cultural images” (Henninger 1) throughout history—the photograph being just one mode of this type of contrived representation and means of female objectification, literature serving as another. Historically there has been, Henninger suggests, “an ongoing contest to determine who and what will represent ‘the south’ and its women” (Henninger 4)—a contest evidenced by the Fugitive-Agrarian impetus to formalize their stance concerning Southern history and memory in the 1930 manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*. Porter deliberately makes use of photography in *Old Mortality* to explore the cultural function

of female objectification; however, Henninger is right to suggest that Porter appears to have reservations regarding the “interpretive ambiguity [of photography] or about the process of representation itself” (4). First and foremost, the act of taking someone’s photograph predisposes the delineation of subject and object—the person taking the photograph and also the person viewing the image enact a gaze on the photographic subject, or resultant image. Photography is thus predicated on a hierarchical relationship that appears to echo the narrative of patriarchy (Henninger 4, 6).

Secondly, it was Faulkner’s representation of women in *The Sound and the Fury*—the reduction of woman and female experience to mere body—that sparked the most objections in Porter the reader. Her reservations about representation that Henninger noted are evident, though, in the narrator’s appraisal of photographs as “portraits by inept painters who meant earnestly to flatter” (*Order* 99). Porter’s anxiety is also evidenced in the girls’ inability “to fit [the figures in photographic images] to the living beings created in their minds by the breathing words of their elders” (*Order* 100). Amy’s portrait is no different. For the two girls, Amy’s “reckless indifferent smile” (*Order* 97) is not only “rather disturbing” (*Order* 97), but also “associated [...] with dead things” (*Order* 98). Certainly, the girls’ reaction to these photographs highlights the potential for disparity even between different modes of representation—in this instance, photography and family stories—of the same object and, thereby, the potential disparity between any given mode of representation and that which it is intended to represent. Essentially, rather than shying away as a result of her own anxieties, Porter appropriates this mode of representation typically characterized by the gender power dynamics of patriarchy in order to, as Henninger suggests, “depict and to question [these very same] paradigms of

visual power” (5). In other words, she utilizes one of the tools whereby female bodies have been historically objectified in order to begin to expose the detrimental effects of such objectification for both males and females in the second section of the text, thereby “[negotiating] the ideologies and conventions” that characterize patriarchy (Henninger 6).

Despite the fact that the photograph in *Old Mortality* is a contrived representation of womanhood, it is no less proscriptive in nature. From her literally-towering position above the family hearth to her representation in family stories one after the other, Amy is situated as the model of ideal female beauty to which each subsequent female generation must endeavor to align themselves. According to the family stories being told to the two young heroines, the ideal woman “must be tall; whatever color the eyes, the hair must be dark, the darker the better; the skin must be pale and smooth” (*Order* 101-2).

Significantly, though, this is an ideal that Maria and Miranda cannot hope to achieve given the reality of their respective genetic make-ups. “[Miranda],” though, the narrator notes, “believed for quite a while that she would one day be like Aunt Amy, not as she appeared in the photograph, but as she was remembered by those who had seen her” (*Order* 102). Within this statement, one should again notice the subtle recognition of the potential for discrepancy between the disparate visual and narrative representations of Amy. Not only does such disparity echo Porter’s anxieties concerning modes of representation mentioned previously, but it marks a growing awareness on the girls’ part of the complex nature of storytelling and the need to be active, rather than passive readers/consumers/inheritors of stories as truth representations of experience.

The girls’ growing awareness of the need for active readership is made even more explicit in the second section of *Old Mortality* set two years later. The narrator asserts

that in this stage of their maturation “[Maria and Miranda have] long since learned to draw the lines between life, which was real and earnest [...] and stories [...] in which things happened as nowhere else” (*Order* 127). In the second section Porter further explores the function of female objectification within the narrative of patriarchy when Maria and Miranda attend a horse race with their father. Porter displaces the politics of storytelling under patriarchy onto the horserace. The alignment of the female body with horses is first suggested earlier on in the text when the narrator likens the young girls’ reading habits to the feeding habits horses; the narrator observes, “[the girls] read as naturally and constantly as ponies crop grass, and with much the same kind of pleasure” (*Order* 126). It is not a stretch, then, to suggest that Amy’s centrality in the first section and the figure of the mare Miss Lucy IV in the second section are intended to be read in relation to one another—more specifically, to inform one another. The manipulation of the mare’s body to win the horse race is, in some sense, an extension or hyperbolic echo of the narrative objectification of Amy’s body.

At the actual horse race, immediately after the mare Miss Lucy IV—ironically the namesake of Amy’s original mare Miss Lucy—wins, Harry insists that Miranda blow her nose. It is not coincidental that the next image with which the girls and the reader are confronted is that of Miss Lucy IV, “bleeding at the nose, two thick red rivulets [...] stiffening her tender mouth and chin, the round velvet chin that Miranda thought the nicest kind of chin in the world” (*Order* 134)—the chin of course being the one of the main physical assets upon which Amy’s societal acceptance hinged in the first section of the text. In *Dirt and Desire*, Yeager suggests, “grotesque bodies [...] become premier sites for exploring the work of a southern polity in which women are barred from public

power but become central players in symbolic scripts” (295). As previously discussed, Porter utilized photography in order to begin to explore the nature of female objectification and the writing of patriarchal anxieties on such bodies. In this second section of *Old Mortality*, the female horse’s body becomes the object upon which the patriarchal narrative is displaced. The mare’s body’s performance dictates the success or failure of Uncle Gabriel’s fortune—hers is the body upon which his fate is writ. Moreover, just as Amy’s narrative lies in the hands of her (mostly male) surviving relatives, Miss Lucy IV’s body is literally controlled by Uncle Gabriel’s and the jockey’s hand (Zender 59). Her body is propelled forward, her course manipulated to achieve a desired end.

As was the case in regard to Amy’s portrait in the first section, Porter’s indictment of the objectification of female bodies symbolized by the running of the race horse is manifested in the girls’ response to and interaction with the female body in question. At first, Miranda longs for the dominance and control that she sees as part of the professionalism of horseracing. “She had lately decided to be a jockey when she grew up,” the narrator notes, “[after] her father had said one day that she was going to be a little thin all her life, she would never be tall” (*Order* 130). When Miranda catches sight of Miss Lucy IV’s body after the race—the pronounced winner and yet physically damaged—the idea of becoming a jockey is not only no longer appealing, but appears downright cruel: “That was winning, too. [Miranda’s] heart clinched tight; that was winning, for Miss Lucy. So instantly and completely did her heart reject that victory, she did not know when it happened, but she hated it, and was ashamed that she had screamed and shed tears for joy when Miss Lucy, with her bloodied nose and bursting heart had

gone past the judges' stand a neck ahead" (*Order* 134). For Porter, the simultaneous victory/suffering of Miss Lucy is equated with the struggle of the woman and woman writer to navigate the patriarchal narrative that dictates her objectification, while she herself wishes to express her own subjectivity. Moreover, Miranda's initial desire to possess control of the animal's body as jockey—to, in some ways, assume the position of authority reserved within the idealized patriarchal tradition for white men—and subsequent repulsion to this same role suggest that the issue is not whether authority or subjectivity is attainable for women. Miranda gives up her intent to be a jockey primarily in reaction to Miss Lucy IV's suffering body, rather than, specifically, in reaction to the actions of the jockey, himself. At this point in the text and in her maturation, Miranda is focused on the suffering of the objectified body, rather than on the deeper, almost-misogynistic overtones of the jockey's actions.

There is another equally significant body that populates the text of *Old Mortality*. This body represents a script of white womanhood that stands in contrast to the one embodied by Amy and venerated by Harry in his stories. I have hitherto avoided mentioning this alternative identity script until beginning an analysis of the third section of the text primarily because it is not until the third section that it is positioned in the forefront of the text. This "counternarrative" (Fornata-Neil 352) of femininity is also represented by a female body—the decidedly unattractive body of Cousin Eva. From the beginning of the text, the reader is made to understand that Eva's position as a kind of blemish on the idealized patriarchal narrative is a result of both her physical appearance and personal ideology. Eva's "two immense front teeth and [...] receding chin" (*Order* 145) essentially mandate Eva's disinheritance from traditional gender scripts of southern

white womanhood as designated by patriarchy. Whether or not her physical deficiencies predated her interest in female education, it is certain that Eva's exclusion from marriage and motherhood—the traditional female roles as dictated by patriarchy—is intended by Porter to be connected with her ideological deviance. Eva is linked to such socio-political issues as female education and women's suffrage, ideas that, essentially, threatened the perceived stability of white male control codified in the patriarchy of the American South in their implicit acknowledgement of the potential for female agency.

For the Gay family elders, this narrative of the chinless “old maid” (*Order* 147) Eva was a convenient one in terms of providing examples of what is, or is not, an acceptable woman within the narrative of patriarchy. It is also, as Fornataro-Neil suggests, a designation that “effectively undercuts Eva's real and progressive orientation” (352) in terms of the assertion of female agency, rendering her essentially a non-threat to the narrative of patriarchy's underlying social hierarchies. The otherness of Eva's body seems only to have been further compounded—presumably as a result of Eva's suffragist efforts—by the time Miranda encounters her again in the third section. Miranda observes that the Eva she confronts on the train “couldn't be past fifty [...] and she look[s] so withered and tired, so famished and sunken in the cheeks, so *old*, somehow” (*Order* 148). On some level, Miranda is fearful that her own deviance from the narrative of patriarchy—enacted in the subversion of her father's approval by means of elopement—might result in a similar decay of her own body. For all intense purposes, Miranda is now situated as an outsider like Eva; though she has managed to marry, it was, significantly, without the blessing and consent of her father. Ultimately, while Miranda could align

herself with Cousin Eva in the fight for female agency, her fear of Eva's body as the future of her own results in stagnating hesitation.

Eva's position as outsider allows her to assume the role of storyteller. When Miranda "innocently" (*Order* 152) suggests, "'everybody loved [Amy]'" (*Order* 152), Eva retorts, "'[Amy] had enemies. If she knew, she pretended she didn't. If she cared, she never said [...] She went through life like a spoiled darling'" (*Order* 152). Moreover, Eva accuses Amy of being "sex-ridden, like the rest [...]" and she pretended not to know what marriage was about" (*Order* 159). Finally, Eva goes on to imply that Amy may have died as a result of the complications of a secret abortion rather than slowly withering away as is suggested by the family stories—knowledge she imparts after upbraiding Miranda, "'You mustn't live in a romantic haze about life'" (*Order* 154). Eva's contempt for Amy reveals that beneath her surface rejection of the patriarchal narrative she actually longs for inclusion into this narrative—she is, as Fornataro-Neil suggests, "a willing participant in that established narrative, since it provides her with a sense of home and history" (352). In this way, Eva's position would seem to echo Porter's own conflicted relationship with the patriarchal narrative propounded by the Fugitive-Agrarians. As Richard Gray aptly suggests, "The cynic, after all, is no more than a betrayed idealist who simply repeats the idealistic error by reversing it" (*Memory* 194). Eva is not representative, as Edelstein maintains, of "a clean history" or "a break from generational memory" (162). Porter's characterization of Eva, then, would seem to indicate that it should not be the goal of the woman writer to break, or separate herself from her male literary peers or the established pastoral tradition, as Harrison suggests. Rather, the woman writer must work within the existing literary community to broaden its thematic

and authorial limitations, in much the same way as Porter is herself engaging with Faulkner's text as reader and woman writer.

Eva's stories about Amy seem "every bit as romantic" (*Order* 159) to Miranda as the stories she's been hearing all her life from her other elders. Moreover, Eva's stories are predicated on the objectification of Amy's body dictated by the patriarchal narrative that Eva believes she is exposing. Eva's attempted critique of the narrative of patriarchy as a whole is thus undermined in a way that intentionally echoes the limitations Porter perceives in Faulkner's dismantling of the idealized narrative of patriarchy. Essentially, for Porter, both Eva and Faulkner fail to transcend the hierarchical constructs engendered by patriarchy because they are unable to disengage from the objectification of the female body and are therefore unable to posit more inclusive alternatives to how identity scripts may be inherited by both men and woman in texts and how intertextual relationships between men and women writers may be conceptualized.

Certainly for Porter, Miranda is not the sole individual detrimentally affected by the patriarchal narrative's objectification of female bodies. Uncle Gabriel, Amy's romanticized beau, becomes emotionally crippled after Amy's death. He refuses to confront the realities of their relationship, opting instead to cleave to the idealized version of their love enumerated in the Gay family stories. Living in a "desolate-looking little hotel" (*Order* 137), Gabriel is haunted almost to the point of delirium with Amy's memory. The effects of this haunting can be seen not only in his rampant alcoholism but also in Miss Honey, Gabriel's second wife from whom Miranda senses "pallid, unquenchable hatred and bitterness" (*Order* 140)—characteristics the reader is made to

understand are derived almost entirely from the sheer vitality of Amy's memory in Gabriel's consciousness.

Despite the fact that "[Miss Honey's] no kin at all" (*Order* 140), Porter seems to be suggesting that Miranda, Gabriel and Miss Honey are related in the sense that they are mutual inheritors or victims of the communal narrative within which Amy's story has been manipulated. Certainly it is true that neither of the women will ever be able to fulfill the gender script of idealized beauty symbolized by Amy. Their primary victimization—and Gabriel's too—lies in the (perhaps unconscious) recognition of the disparity between the stories told about Amy and the reality of Amy's person. Indeed, it is out of fear of having to face his present dissatisfaction and own his self-destruction that Gabriel allows himself to drench his recollection of his relationship with Amy in blatant nostalgia as a survival mechanism of sorts. Indeed, as Brinkmeyer notes, "Gabriel continually measures what happens to him in light of his memories of his days with Amy, recalling her with almost every breath" (170). As one might anticipate, Miss Honey's pain and frustration stem from an inescapable awareness that the Amy of Gabriel's memory did not exist but is the product, and a function of the patriarchal narrative. As the experience of each of these characters attests, the objectification of the female body, as it fails to convey a complete and authentic representation of womanhood, can be destructive for both men and women regardless of their place within the gender hierarchy.

Walking home with her father and Eva at the end of *Old Mortality*, Miranda senses her isolation acutely; she considers, "It is I who have no place [...] Where are my own people and my own time" (*Order* 163). She then thinks about her elders alongside her—the chief storytellers/creators of the proscriptive gender scripts, who by means of

their stories, she reckons, “denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes, who demanded that she accept their version of life and yet could not tell her the truth, not in the smallest thing” (*Order* 163). The text concludes with Miranda’s vow to “know the truth about what happens to me” (*Order* 166)—that is, to write her own story having been dispossessed from the idealized narrative of patriarchy. The narrator, however, qualifies Miranda’s promise to herself noting that Miranda’s vow is made “in [Miranda’s] hopefulness, her ignorance” (*Order* 166). Suzanne Jones suggests that the ending of the text may imply that Porter herself is ultimately “skeptical about achieving the control over a text the feminist reader hopes for” (178).

As if to answer Suzanne Jones’ estimation of the end of *Old Mortality*, Porter in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1937) nods to the perhaps disgruntled feminist camp by inverting the traditional gender hierarchy dictated by the patriarchal narrative and positioning Miranda as the subject/authority as opposed to objectified body in what Anne Goodwyn Jones suggests is a narrative of matriarchy (“Gender” 142). Certainly, the assumption of the position of authority by a female such as Miranda is part and parcel of that “control” Suzanne Jones noted was lacking at the end of *Old Mortality* (S. Jones 187). Yet, Porter’s characterization of female subjectivity in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is again riddled with anxiety concerning the hierarchical nature of the subject-object relationship. Indeed, Miranda possess a certain amount of control within the text, but it comes at the cost of the objectification of the male bodies around her and the writing of her own turmoil onto said bodies. Thus, because the narrative constitutes a mere inversion of the hierarchical subject-object relationship, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is not an

anti-patriarchal narrative but is just a patriarchal one recast like Eva's version of Amy's story.

As Anne Goodwyn Jones's work attests, Porter's framing of this hierarchy-reversal within the context of the First World War is in itself significant. Indeed, the years during and immediately following the First World War were characterized by social and ideological upheavals concerning the boundaries of traditional gender roles (A. Jones, "Gender" 135-136). Jones explores these shifting notions concerning gender identity during the war years in both Faulkner and Porter. According to Jones, up until the turn of the century, war existed in the American consciousness as "a chance to confirm, or recreate, the traditional sense of manhood as courage and physical prowess, grace under pressure" ("Gender" 135). With their men shoring up traditional masculinity on the battlefield, women were granted enough independence to help bolster efforts on the home front; war's end, however, brought about swift retrenchment in the domestic space and inferior marital role (135). Any shifts in the boundaries of normative gender scripts were fleeting and, even in their brevity, appropriate only as a means of meeting the needs of the nation in turmoil. But the mental and emotional havoc wrought as a result of trench warfare in First World War led to the perceived weakening of masculine virility on the part of the American public (136). Simultaneously, the women's suffrage movement was beginning to gain new ground. As A. Jones indicates, the era of the First World War was thus characterized by a questioning of "traditional gender-definitions" (136) on the part of the American people. For Porter to set this female-subject/male-object relationship against the backdrop of such a tumultuous time is to implicitly suggest that such a reversal is only probable during temporal expanses of national crises,

bookended by peacetimes during which gender scripts may be realigned in accordance with the values of traditional patriarchy (A. Jones, "Gender" 146).

As if to further indicate the transient nature of Porter's recasting of the hierarchical subject-object relationship, much of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* reads as though it were a dream. As the opening of the narrative suggests, in many instances, it is unclear if the narrative is merely a figment of Miranda's unconscious. In her sleep, Miranda imagines she is being chased by the "Death and devil" (*Pale* 180)—"a lank greenish stranger" (*Pale* 180) that Miranda remembers "hanging about the [home] place, welcomed by my grandfather, my great-aunt, my five times removed cousin, my decrepit hound and my silver kitten" (*Pale* 180). Despite the decidedly dark connotations of this imagery, the reader is quickly made to understand that it is through sleep that Miranda is able to enact an escape from the realities of warfare that include convoluted, amorphous gender scripts. To that effect, she imagines herself in an idealized version of her childhood home. "How I have loved this house," she considers in her dream-state, "in the morning before we are all awake and tangled together like badly cast fishing lines. Too many people have been born here, and have wept too much here" (*Pale* 197). She is preoccupied, moreover, with the notion of the "early morning" when she imagines "there are no false shapes or surmises" (*Pale* 181). These latter dream images connote a longing not for a sort of pre-gender, *tabula rosa* state, but for the naivety that characterized her childhood consumption of family stories detailed in *Old Mortality*. In childhood, there were no "false shapes or surmises" (*Pale* 181) to her mind because she possessed no awareness of the potential for discrepancy between reality and the various representations of reality. Indeed, to sense whether or not a narrative such as patriarchy, or a

representation such as that of the objectified female, is a contrived one is to be susceptible thenceforth to great anxiety concerning the authenticity of any stories or representations encountered thereafter. It is this anxiety from which Miranda seeks escape.

Part of Miranda's anxiety is linked to the burgeoning ideology of patriotism that accompanied the start of the war. Patriotism is a communal narrative in the same way that patriarchy is a communal narrative—it is the means by which society understands itself and whereby individuals understood their roles particularly in the war effort. Like the narrative of patriarchy, the narrative of patriotism contains gender scripts to which men and women must align themselves in order to ensure the safety or wellbeing of the state. Specifically, according to the narrative of patriotism, men and women took on new roles such as soldier and nurse, respectively, roles ordinarily outside of the traditional patriarchal family. Anne Goodwyn Jones discusses these shifting roles in depth as she is specifically concerned with how Faulkner and Porter interpret the inflection of gender roles that seemed to characterize the First World War ("Gender" 136-137). For herself, Miranda engages in the acting out of the new gender scripts of patriotism, but only to a certain extent, and rather begrudgingly. When it comes to dances organized for enlisted men, she "draw[s] the line at talking to them" (*Pale* 191): "I'll dance with them, every dumbbell who asks me, but I will NOT talk to them, I said, even if there is a war" (*Pale* 191). And while walking the halls of the hospital ward for the Red Cross, she feels immediately "miserably embarrassed at the idiocy of her errand" (*Pale* 192). Miranda also spends much of the text resisting the purchase of a Liberty Bond, a tenet of her new identity script under patriotism.

It is in the act of fulfilling her new patriotic gender role as a nurse that Miranda encounters her first significant male body of the text. She wanders the halls of the hospital ward with “wilted” (*Pale* 192) flowers and demeanor starkly contrasted to the “girlish laughter” of her fellow nurses “meant to be refreshingly gay” (*Pale* 192). Then, looking over all the “picturesquely bandaged” (*Pale* 192) male bodies, Miranda catches the “unfriendly bitter eye” of a man with a “hostile face” (*Pale* 192). Almost immediately she is repulsed by his demeanor and retreats from his vision, her “face burning” (*Pale* 193). From outside the ward, however, she proceeds to spy on him—“his eyebrows in a sad bitter frown” (*Pale* 193), she wonders why “she could not place him at all, [...] could not imagine where he came from nor what sort of being he might have been ‘in life’” (*Pale* 193). Looking upon the soldier, Miranda renders him, ““My own feelings [...] made flesh”” (*Pale* 193).

Miranda’s encounter with the wounded soldier in the ward is significant on many levels. First, Porter makes much of the soldier’s scarred body mutilated by war. As Anne Goodwyn Jones’s discussion of masculine wartime duties implies, the taking on of the role of soldier means primarily to offer one’s body as a potential sacrifice on behalf of the nation (A. Jones, “Gender” 135). Men are thus reduced to expendable bodies on which the communal ideals of courage and righteousness are writ. Miranda can ascertain no idea as to “where he came from nor what sort of being he might have been ‘in life’” (193). The wounded soldier Miranda encounters has no identity apart from “soldier”—his mutilated body the flesh and blood remnants of the narrative of patriotism at work. Second, by removing herself from the range of the soldier’s gaze, Miranda denies the soldier mutual subjectivity, relegating him, thereby, to a mere object, subject to her

scrutiny. Lastly, for Miranda, the soldier's body is a physical space upon which her fears about the war and anxieties related to shifting gender roles are writ. Such objectification on Miranda's part echoes, of course, the writing of the Compson males' anxieties concerning the decay of the idealized patriarchy onto their sister Caddy's body at the center of the text. Just as the "tainting" of Caddy's body by means of premarital sex symbolizes the dismantling of the traditional patriarchal family, so, too, does the soldier's desecrated body take on meaning as the physical manifestation of Miranda's inner turmoil.

Miranda's encounter with the soldier in the hospital ward is only one instance of her trying on the power of objectification in the course of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. She continually sizes up her male counterparts, measuring them against what she perceives to be the gender script of masculinity set forth by the narrative of patriotism. She describes one of the bondsmen as "pursy-face, gross-mouthed, with little lightless eyes," while the other bondsman's stare is described as "stony, really viciously cold" with "a set of features otherwise nondescript, the face of men who have no business of their own" (*Pale* 185). As was the case of Eva in *Old Mortality*, the descriptions of the bondsmen's bodies are good indicators as to their relation to the normative gender scripts currently being propagated within the community. The unfavorable characterization of the bondsmen's bodies merely compounds the sense that they have failed the narrative of patriotism in their inability to assume the role of soldier, being relegated, instead, by their inferior physicality to the job of peddling bonds.

Miranda's fellow employees at the newspaper suffer the same sort of objectification because they too are "rejected men" (*Pale* 216) or rejected bodies—

rejected, that is by the government for military service and therefore denied the opportunity to participate fully in the narrative of patriotism through physical military action. Considering his diminutive stature and mannerisms, Miranda muses that her editor Bill “would never [...] be more than fourteen years old if he lived for a century” (*Pale* 211). Miranda’s co-worker Chuck is yet another male body that falls under Miranda’s gaze. Chuck’s rejected body becomes expressly related to a failed masculinity: “he didn’t give a damn about sports, really; the [sports writing] job kept him in the open [...] He preferred shows and didn’t see why women always had the job” (*Pale* 211). Miranda’s scrutiny of Chuck and her other male co-workers is ironic, of course, considering Miranda’s own sense of isolation and frustration at her inability to find a space to tell her own story in *Old Mortality*. Thus Miranda, like Eva and even Faulkner, unwittingly reinforces and perpetuates the proscription of gender roles by communal narratives in her appraisal of these male bodies. To use Brinkmeyer’s words, “she ironically acts precisely as the elders of her family had done—precisely as she has pledged to avoid acting” (177).

The most significant male body for Miranda is that of Adam, Miranda’s beau. Adam is described as “fine and golden” (*Pale* 225) and his person is likened to “a healthy apple” (*Pale* 198). Moreover, in his soldier’s uniform—“all olive and tan and tawny, hay colored and sand colored from hair to boots” (*Pale* 196)—he is positioned as a bulwark of acceptable if not idealized masculinity as delineated by the narrative of patriotism. Indeed, Adam has willfully assumed the role of soldier, minimizing all individual or personal motives for the betterment of the collective good and national interest. Adam’s taking on of this role is symbolized, interestingly enough, in the wearing of a

wristwatch—a narrative inclusion by Porter that links Adam and his appropriate gender script fulfillment to Quentin Compson and his pocket watch that serves as a reminder of his inability to assume the role of proper southern gentleman. When Adam is introduced in the text, he confirms the time, “slipping back his sleeve with an exaggerated thrust” (*Pale* 196) so that he might see the face of his wrist watch. The narrator explains Adam’s awkward, emphatic movement by noting, “young soldiers were [...] self-conscious about their wrist watches” (*Pale* 196). Indeed, “Such of them as Miranda knew,” the narrator continues, “were boys from southern and southwestern towns, far off the Atlantic seaboard, and they had always believed that only sissies wore wrist watches” (*Pale* 196).

Adam’s wrist watch wearing indicates that the taking on of the role of the patriotic soldier mandates a shift in sensibility even so far as to dictate the accessories adorning the male body. As Adam states, “We’ve been told time and again how all the he-manly regular army men wear [the wrist watches]. It’s the horrors of war” (*Pale* 197). The soldier’s uniform is yet another means of marking the male body as acceptably patriotic. The narrator describes Adam as “tall and heavily muscled in the shoulders, narrow in the waist and flanks” (*Pale* 197); dressed for duty, his person gives the impression of being “infinitely buttoned, strapped, harnessed into a uniform as tough and unyielding in cut as a strait jacket” (*Pale* 197). In the effectual erasure of individuality, the uniform and, symbolically, the masculine patriotic gender script are both constrictive.

Even for Adam, the assumption of the role of “soldier” is riddled with anxieties, the chief one being the potential for the loss of self distinct from that of “soldier.” Adam attempts to offer an alternative—more personal narrative—for himself to Miranda. He “[shows Miranda] snapshots of himself at the wheel of his roadster; of himself sailing a

boat, looking very free and windblown, all angles, hauling the ropes [...] trying to tell her what kind of person he was when he had his machinery with him” (*Pale* 209). His efforts are of no avail, however, because Miranda refuses to acknowledge any disparity between “Adam” and “soldier.” Responding to his stories of his life before the war, Miranda considers, “[she] felt she knew pretty well what kind of person he was, and would have like to tell him that if she thought he had left himself at home in a boat or an automobile, he was much mistaken” (*Pale* 209). In doing so, Miranda “becomes wholly an agent of the corruption she hates” (A. Jones, “Gender 144). Adam’s opportunity to tell his own story is thwarted by Miranda’s need to control Adam’s story and therefore calm her own concerns concerning identity script inheritance; if Miranda cannot express her own voice, neither should Adam. Moreover, Adam, like Amy, is described as a Christ-like figure. Miranda muses, “there was no resentment or revolt in him. Pure, she thought, all the way through, flawless, complete, as the sacrificial lamb must be” (*Pale* 224). Indeed, Adam’s personal narrative is sacrificed for Miranda’s subjectivity, just as the silencing of Caddy made way for masculine expression and Amy’s postmortem silence allowed surviving family members to construct Amy’s story any way they saw fit in *Old Mortality*.

Miranda’s behavior is thus paradoxical. Choosing to refrain from acknowledging the identity of “soldier” as a gender script mandated by patriotism, Miranda is indulging in, and ultimately propagating, the same “false shapes and surmises” (*Pale* 181) that she abhors (A. Jones 144). That is, by objectifying Adam, Miranda perpetuates the same hierarchical values that led to the silencing of Aunt Amy. Her resistance to making this acknowledgement is essentially an act of escapism from admitting that she herself has not managed to write her own story outside of the identity scripts she has inherited. Just as

Gabriel's memory of Amy becomes for Gabriel a means of escape from the realities of his financial and emotional destitution, Miranda achieves a certain feeling of stability from the romanticizing of Adam. For instance, when Adam "[boasts] that he had never had a pain in his life that he could remember" (*Pale* 198), Miranda "approved his monstrous uniqueness" because she herself "had too many pains to mention" (*Pale* 198). This impulse for stabilization is rooted partially in a fear of the brutality of war. When together, Miranda and Adam walk "turning their faces up to a generous sky really blue and spotless" (*Pale* 196), determinedly oblivious to the real consequences of war. In one scene in particular, they distance themselves from a passing funeral—"the mourners seated straight and firm as if proud in their sorrow" (*Pale* 196)—by engaging in "small talk that [flies] back and forth over little grooves worn in the thin upper surface of the brain, things you [can] say and hear clink reassuringly [...] without disturbing the radiance" (*Pale* 198).

More significantly, the romanticization of Adam's position as soldier allows Miranda to avoid acknowledging that she hasn't yet broken free from the identity scripts she has inherited to tell her own story as she vowed at the conclusion of *Old Mortality* (Brinkmeyer 177). Miranda's journalism, which seems an assertion of female subjectivity, is acceptable only during this time of national upheaval. Further, she is restricted to reviewing plays and other forms of local entertainment; thus, she is not writing original stories but merely recording that which is put forward for her consumption. Miranda's refusal to purchase war bonds might also seem to indicate that she has acquired some independence from her own inherited gender scripts. Rather, Miranda has managed merely to trade one gender script for another. By objectifying

Adam, Miranda is fulfilling the partial subjectivity granted by the narrative of patriotism. Thus, as Gail Mortimer aptly states, “[Porter] records what Faulkner had described as a decided move away from one’s past as an illusory separation, necessary perhaps to a sense of adulthood, but ephemeral as well. In Porter’s fictive world, there is no permanent release from the webs of meaning and relationship into which families (and others) weave us” (18).

It is in “The Grave” (1935) where Porter’s alternative pattern of identity script inheritance and means of configuring intertextual relationships achieves actualization. This new alternative inheritance pattern Porter sets forth is one of necessarily-mutual inheritance across gender hierarchies—a pattern that suggests that a revisioning of Mortimer’s “webs of meaning and relationship” (18) is what should take place rather than the enactment of a “permanent release” from these “webs” (18). Specifically, Porter recasts the sibling relationship used by Faulkner whereby Caddy was silenced to assert that, ultimately, the potential for the transcendence of mandated gender scripts lies in the mutual or cross inheritance between and among sibling pairs.

Faulkner himself has located the vision of Caddy’s muddy underpants as impetus for writing *The Sound and the Fury* (“Session” 1). Each section of the text marks a new attempt to tell the story of Caddy, her daughter Quentin, and the demise of the patriarchal Compson family (“Session” 1). Again, there has been a considerable amount of scholarship specifically addressing the symbolism of the muddy underpants in the tree-climbing scene as a signifier of female sexuality and their function as the central image in a story that is ultimately about the downfall of a family and the dismantling of a regional ideal. The issue is not only the dirty underpants themselves as a foreshadowing of

Caddy's (deviant) premarital sexual experience, but also the sibling dynamic exhibited in the way the Compson men react to Caddy as a figure of tainted femininity. After falling into the muddy creek bed, Caddy splashes her brothers with the dirty water. Quentin scoffs almost immediately, "'Now I guess you're satisfied. [...] We'll both get whipped now'" (*Sound* 19). From my perspective, Caddy's splashing must be read as an implicit acknowledgement on her part of their—her brothers' and hers—connectedness; her brothers, though, reject the idea of being implicated by her deviant behavior. But Faulkner's own impulse to keep recounting the details of this scene suggests that while the Compson men (and Faulkner himself) might wish to deny their connectedness, their preoccupation with Caddy's body suggests otherwise.

Quentin and Jason invest in the maintenance of Caddy's purity, but they are crippled by her failure to fulfill the patriarchal gender script of pure white womanhood. Anne Goodwyn Jones aptly suggests, "the Southern lady is at the core of a region's self-definition" (*Tomorrow* 4). Each of Caddy's male siblings has a distinct, though equally visceral, reaction to her near-naked body; Quentin slaps her, Jason threatens to report her deviant behavior to their father for corporal punishment, and Benjy cries. As we will see in "The Grave," for Porter, siblings and their respective abilities to fulfill inherited identity scripts are inextricably connected. By silencing Caddy, however, Faulkner denies this mutuality of the Compson siblings, privileging, instead, male subjectivity in accordance with patriarchal values.

As Barbara Ladd has pointed out, "Faulkner is preoccupied with the burdens of legitimacy and inheritance" (87). Themes of inheritance and disinheritance or dispossession may be manifest either in terms of land/property or even identity scripts. In

The Sound and the Fury, Caddy is dispossessed as a result of her sexual behavior; she slept with, and was impregnated by, Dalton Ames before her marriage to another man. After the truth of Caddy's child's paternity is revealed, Mrs. Compson refuses to allow Caddy's name to be mentioned in the Compson home, attempting, thereby, to extricate Caddy from the family's genealogy. Benjy is another deliberately disinherited figure. Because of his mental handicap, Mrs. Compson changes his name from "Maury"—the name, also, of Benjy's maternal uncle and, therefore, an explicit indicator of his ancestry—to "Benjamin" in order so as to distance Benjy from her own ancestral bloodline. This dispossession is also manifest in the selling of the pasture intended for Benjy's inheritance in order to send Quentin to Harvard to succeed as a proper Southern gentleman and thus carry on the tradition of idealized patriarchy. While it is true that in "Compson Appendix: 1699-1945," Faulkner asserts that the pasture in question was merely an object—like fire or Caddy herself—from which Benjy derived a simplistic feeling of comfort, in no way is the significance of this particular disinheritance lessened (1139). Regardless of the level of Benjy's self-awareness of his own entitlement, the selling of the Compson land reinforces the ties between appropriate white masculinity and the idealized plantation.

Because it is the sibling dynamic that most critics seem to focus on, and which Porter herself echoes in "The Grave," the Quentin-Caddy relationship is arguably the most pertinent sibling pairing to an examination of gender script inheritance. Quentin's section is characterized by fervent anxiety. He is obsessed with the irrevocability of time and also the influence of the past on the present, one such element of his past being Caddy's premarital sexual encounter with, and impregnation by Dalton Ames. While

Jason, Quentin's younger brother, also retains sexual outrage in relation to Caddy's sexuality, his is rooted in a lust for the ability to assert power and authority over her body. Quentin's lingering preoccupation, on the other hand, stems from his urge to serve as her protector. In "Compson Appendix: 1699-1945," Faulkner introduces Quentin as "[he] who loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead as a miniature replica of all the whole vase globy earth may be poised on the nose of a trained seal" (1132). Quentin acknowledges the connection between Caddy's bodily purity, his own role as a white Southern male, and the maintenance of familial and communal honor. It is for this reason that Quentin goes so far as to wish that Caddy's sexual encounter had been incestuous—himself, the violator of her body—so that he could assume the protection of her body in their mutual banishment to hell, "[in] the clean flame the two of us more than dead" (*Sound* 116). Indeed, to Faulkner's mind, it wasn't "the idea of incest" driving Quentin, but "some presbyterian concept of its eternal punishment" where, again, "he could guard [Caddy] forever and keep her forever more intact amid the eternal fires" (Faulkner, "Appendix" 1132).

Despite its psychological density, Quentin's narrative section spans only the course of one day; it is, however, the day that he is preparing to commit suicide as a result of his failure to fulfill his role of the white southern gentleman—protector and provider of womanhood. Ultimately, he cannot, as he once argued with his father, "shirk all things" (*Sound* 81) and forget that he is implicated in Caddy's failure to adhere to her own inherited gender script. He muses, "Why couldn't it have been me and not her [Caddy] who is unvirgin" (*Sound* 78). Caddy's inability to play the role of the pure white

female complicates Quentin's own ability to play the role of the Harvard-educated, southern gentleman. This fact is most evident in Quentin's incessant questioning of all the men he encounters—"Did you ever have a sister? Did you? Did you?" (*Sound* 78)—as if to call attention to the connectivity of his and Caddy's respective fates. Quentin even tries to recreate the brother-sister relationship dictated by patriarchy by assuming, temporarily, the guardianship of a wandering, seemingly orphan Italian girl. He even goes so far as to call her "sister." But he fails to deliver her to her home and is ultimately harassed for his benevolent efforts.

That Porter was drawn to this sibling relationship between the objectified female Caddy and subject Quentin is evidenced in the relationship Porter constructs between Miranda and her brother Paul in "The Grave." In "The Grave," the brother and sister pair ventures into an abandoned forest of sorts in search of adventure, more specifically knowledge. Significantly, the space that they enter was once a part of their future inheritance, but from which they've recently been dispossessed—a landscape thus purposely at odds with the idealized narrative landscape of the plantation. Moreover, the bones of the siblings' Grandfather as well as other ancestors have been unearthed and relocated. The children are thus acutely aware of their disfranchisement and the fact that their inheritance has been quite literally eradicated from the land they wish to explore; such a notion suggests that for Porter, the physical space of the abandoned forest is a space wherein transcendence of inherited gender scripts could potentially be possible.

The physical space they enter on this "burning day" is itself a dilapidated space—"a pleasant small neglected garden of tangled rose bushes and ragged cedar trees and cypress, [with] the simple flat stones rising out of uncropped sweet-smelling wild grass"

(*Order* 48)—reminiscent of a fallen Eden. Miranda and Paul are innocents in search of adventure—that is, until they examine the graves that now, disappointingly, are mere “pits” (49). With great reverence and “purposeful accuracy” (*Order* 49), they examine the former graves. Despite the fact that they are occupying a fallen Eden, Miranda and Paul, at their initial entrance into the space, do not yet possess the language with which to conceptualize their experience of encountering the former graves: “trying by words to shape a special, suitable emotion in their minds, but they felt nothing except an agreeable thrill of wonder: they were seeing a new sight, something they had not done before” (*Order* 49). But to peer down into the inexplicable graves is not enough—they, like the inhabitants of the first Eden—crave further knowledge, sensing, in their current perspective, “a small disappointment at the entire commonplaceness of the actual spectacle” (*Order* 49).

It is at this point in their search for knowledge that both Miranda and Paul jump into two of the former graves. Miranda finds herself fully immersed in her Grandfather’s former resting place. Looking to discover something new and exciting, Miranda begins to dig through the earth and discovers, thereupon, a silver dove with a “hollow” breast in a handful of earth that has “a pleasantly sweet, corrupt smell” (*Order* 49). Paul unearths his own bit of treasure—“a thin wide gold ring carved with intricate flowers and leaves” (*Order* 50). The siblings then emerge from their respective graves, each armed with newly-gained knowledge to share with the other. After a short consultation, the children decide to exchange their treasures, and Paul bestows his ring upon Miranda’s thumb where it fits “perfect” (*Order* 50) in a scene reminiscent of a marital vow exchange.

The bestowal of the ring on Miranda's finger is only one act indicative of what S. H. Poss calls "the symbolic rendering of experience" enacted within this short story. Indeed, the ring and the dove coffin handle are symbols of the gender scripts set forth by patriarchy of the male-authority/subject and female-object to which Paul and Miranda are intended to ascribe. Certainly, the placing of the ring on Miranda's finger results in a sudden awareness of her current un-femaleness: "the ring [...] turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet, toes sticking through" (*Order* 53). Once wearing the ring, she longs, instead, as many scholars including Andrea Frankwitz have noted, for the trappings associated with traditional femininity—a bath, talcum powder, and a dress "with a big sash" (*Order* 53). But more significant for Porter, perhaps, is the actual moment of exchange of the treasures and thereby the gender scripts intended for inheritance between Paul and Miranda. Indeed, for Porter, it is not coincidental that Miranda instead of Paul stumbles into their Grandfather's grave; Porter deliberately constructs an exchange between the two children to suggest a mutual inheritance between sibling pairs. Even though the ring Paul gives Miranda appears to steer Miranda toward a patriarchal notion of femininity, in the very act of exchange Miranda maintains as much agency in regard to Paul's identity script inheritance as he does in regard to her. In other words, Paul cannot lead their expedition if Miranda does not choose to "[follow] Paul's heels" (*Order* 50). There is no sense of hierarchy or necessary objectification of another's body for the assertion of one's own subjectivity in the siblings' interaction. Such mutuality between sibling inheritors undermines the values of patriarchy because it presupposes the equality of both subjects—neither script inheritor nor storyteller is privileged above the other. The mutuality suggested by sibling pairs is an anti-patriarchal

narrative. Thus, it is in the very act of exchange that Porter locates the potential for the transcendence of such gender scripts. The breaking free of gender scripts cannot be achieved in isolation; rather it requires the mutual participation of both men and women.

Porter's proposed notion of mutuality, however, proves a mere fleeting idealization of sibling relationships. The exchange of identity scripts is followed almost immediately, and all but eclipsed by, the killing and desecration of a female body. Paul spies a leaping rabbit that he shoots and kills. He then "very carefully" proceeds to dissect the rabbit's body to satisfy both his and Miranda's mutual curiosity—"[slitting] the thin flesh from the center ribs to the flanks" (*Order* 54)—only to reveal "a bundle of tiny rabbits, each wrapped within a thin scarlet veil" (*Order* 54) within the lifeless female rabbit's womb. The children "[kneeling] facing each other over the dead animal" (*Order* 53) resemble the enactment of a religious rite. From this kneeling position, Miranda observes her brother's desecration of the body with admiration and curiosity. But, once the womb and its contents are exposed—that is, once the rabbit is revealed to be female—Miranda becomes most conflicted. Indeed, "[she] began to tremble without knowing why. Yet she wanted most deeply to see and to know. Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along. The very moment of her former ignorance faded, she had always known just this" (*Order* 54).

According to Frankwitz, "Just as the treasure of the tomb symbolizes tradition, the 'treasure' of the womb symbolized the destruction of the feminine" (*Order* 481). Essentially, the desecration of the rabbit's notably female body and the dissection of its womb reinforce the objectification of the female body dictated by the values of patriarchy, and Paul, of course, is the one wielding the dissection knife. Indeed, as

Frankwitz suggests, “Paul’s change in manner at the discovery of the womb testifies to the power it commands over him”—after all, the womb is a “strictly female source of potentiality” (481). Within the social and cultural institution of patriarchy, however, the power is attributed to “the womb, not the woman” (Frankwitz 481). Again, even in terms of her reproductive and regenerative potential, woman is reduced to a mere female body, quite literally at the mercy of a young male seeking to assert his masculinity. Ultimately, Paul reasserts his masculine subjectivity/authority by speaking in such a way to Miranda as to suggest that he had prior knowledge of the rabbit’s womb and thereby the intricacies of the life-cycle. Miranda feels as though “She understood a little of the secret, formless intuitions in her mind and body” (*Order* 55). Indeed, seeing the rabbit’s womb Miranda acquires the knowledge concerning the power of her body firsthand. Paul chides her “[in] a confidential tone quite unusual in him” (*Order* 55), reminiscent of the way a father might speak to his daughter: ““Don’t tell Dad because I’ll get into trouble. He’ll say I’m leading you into things you ought not to do. He’s always saying that”” (*Order* 55). Thus, by attributing responsibility for the discovery of the rabbit to his actions alone, Paul essentially undermines Miranda’s agency/subjectivity.

“The Grave” ends with Miranda recalling this scene some years later while walking the streets of “a strange city of a strange country” (*Order* 55). This particular experience of knowledge, power, and gender distinction has been internalized—“it [had sunk] quietly in her mind and was heaped over by accumulated thoughts and of impressions” (*Order* 55). Noticeably, it is only in this distinctly foreign space where Miranda is able to “frame” (*Order* 56) the childhood episode with any sort of agency to see “plain and clear [...] its true colors” (*Order* 56). Brinkmeyer asserts that this ending

of “The Grave” indicates a newly achieved “wholeness of self” for both Miranda and, by extension, Porter in her art (181). Paul, however, by appropriating the knowledge of the female rabbit-body’s reproductive powers so as to position himself as an authority/patriarchal figure, intentionally denied their sibling mutuality. The story closes with Miranda’s visualizing of her brother in his youth, “standing again in the blazing sunshine, again twelve years old, a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands” (*Order* 56), newly initiated in the way of male authority as afforded him by the patriarchal narrative.

Miranda’s recollection of Paul must not be read, as Brinkmeyer suggests, as “[a celebration of] the victory of the individual, and of the artist, to forge wholeness, order, and beauty from the secrets of memory” on Porter’s part as a woman writer (181). Instead, Miranda’s retroactive consideration of Paul’s induction into the authority privileged him by his maleness may be read as an echo of Porter’s reading of Faulkner and her perception of Faulkner himself. For Porter, the female reader and woman writer, Faulkner is a Paul-like figure with “a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands” (*Order* 56). Indeed, Faulkner *is* Paul. Faulkner silences Caddy and thereby denies female agency, opting instead to tell the woman’s story using the “proper tools” (Faulkner, “Session” 6) or male voices, in much the same way that Paul insists on telling Miranda about the capabilities of her own female body. The scene of treasure exchange in “The Grave” is intended, thus, as an alternative pattern—no matter how fleeting—not only to the inheritance of identity scripts across gender hierarchies of the narrative of patriarchy but also in terms of intertextual relationships between male and female authors. For Porter, such relationships can, and must, be

understood as sibling rivalries rather than hierarchical parent-child relationships. Further, it is no coincidence that the female rabbit body cut at the womb in “The Grave” harkens back to the image of the mutilated—also in the womb—woman in the news story Porter described to Caroline Gordon. It is thus in the suggestion of sibling rivalries both in text and between male and female authors as a way to mitigate gender hierarchies that Porter attempts to make room in the American literary consciousness for the un-silencing of the mutilated woman, Caddy, and herself as a woman writer.

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